

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5112

As of February 5, 2009

Title: An act relating to the one hundred eighty-day school year requirement.

Brief Description: Eliminating the 180-day school year requirement while maintaining the one thousand instructional hour requirement.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford and King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Brandon Roché (786-7405)

Background: A school district's basic educational program must consist of a minimum of 180 school days per school year in such grades from one through 12 as are offered by the district. For kindergarten, a district must offer 180 half-days or its equivalent of instruction. In addition to the number of days per school year, hourly instructional requirements are also set in law. School districts must provide at least 450 hours for kindergarten and a district-wide annual average of 1,000 hours for grades one through 12.

The State Board of Education may grant a school district a waiver to the minimum day and hour requirements if the waiver is necessary to implement a plan designed to enhance the educational program for all students in the district.

Summary of Bill: The 180-day component of what constitutes a school year is removed. The same 180 half-day requirement is removed for kindergarten programs. A district-wide average of 1,000 instructional hours are to be required by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of distribution of basic education funding. Kindergarten programs require 450 instructional hours.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is purely optional, it does not require schools to move to four-day weeks. This just gives them flexibility. We believe this would save costs on transportation and energy. The additional savings would allow our students better access to additional programs. Our staff could come together as a whole for professional development. This could help us deal with decreasing revenue. Seventeen states have similar programs in place.

We have had community meetings and talked to stakeholders in our district and only three families have said they did not like this idea. The longer school day would extend activity time as well as academic time. This just gives us flexibility.

This allows school districts to have these debates and make these decisions. This is not a perfect system but it may work for some. This is the ultimate local control bill.

CON: This applies to all school districts and impacts all hourly staff. Looking at the broad picture, employees will be losing retirement credit and districts will not be able to attract employees. The introduction points out transportation and utilities and both of these things are underfunded. We hope that there's also recognition that this will hurt food service and cause higher food prices.

There are two sides to the issue. The length of time in a school day is a concern for student focus and safety as they would be getting to school in the dark. When a student misses a day they are missing 25 percent of the week. There's also teacher exhaustion. The only way you save 20 percent is if you totally shut the buildings down on the fifth day.

Our group is concerned about the amount of time children spend focusing on one particular subject. The 90-minute classes are too long for some children.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Ric Palmer, Bickleton School District; Martin Huffman, Lyle School District; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors Association.

CON: Doug Nelson, Public School Employees - SEIU 1948; Lucinda Young, Washington Educator's Association; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.